



## The Commissioner's Commentary

FALL 2009

### Recent Changes Designed to Enhance Safety and Security

The New Jersey Department of Corrections remains steadfast in its commitment to keep cell phones and other contraband out of our facilities. That's why we have embarked on a series of initiatives that impact on visitors, inmates and staff members.

The visitor identification process has been strengthened – including the receipt of inmate funds through visitors – and a policy of pat-searching all visitors has been implemented. In addition, the number of authorized items permitted in visit areas has been limited, and all vending machines have been removed.



**Commissioner George Hayman**

All inmates entering or exiting a facility must be strip-searched and then searched using a BOSS (Bodily Orifice Security Scanner) chair specifically to eliminate the possibility of electronic devices and other contraband from being hidden in body cavities. Furthermore, urine tests are utilized to help identify inmates who are using and possibly trafficking drugs and conducting other gang-related activities. Custody staff uniforms have been modified to remove all metal accessories, enabling entry-point walk-through metal detectors to be placed on the highest settings and calibrated routinely to help eliminate the possible introduction of contraband into facilities.

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*While security enhancements are valuable tools, it falls to our employees, the outstanding men and women of Corrections, to continue their fine work in keeping our prisons – and staff – safe and secure.*

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In its ongoing efforts to deter cell phone use among the inmate population, the NJDOC is among the first departments of corrections in the nation to utilize canines to detect cell phones. Our Special Operations Group's Canine Unit continues to train its own staff and dogs for cell phone detection.

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The NJDOC also has made elected officials aware of its support for changes in federal regulations that prohibit the jamming of cell phone signals in correctional facilities. Additionally, the

department has contacted a company to arrange the demonstration of a wireless device detection system it has developed.

Foremost among a series of personnel changes is the addition of an assistant chief investigator to the Internal Affairs Unit to allow for the complete separation of Internal Affairs and the Special Investigations Division.

In an effort to develop the most thorough possible screening process for potential NJDOC employees, the Custody Recruitment Unit has received more than 180 hours of training in such critical areas as investigative interviews, gang identification, computer networking investigations and drug identification. Potential employees must complete a 28-page recruit application and are now subject to home visits and extensive interviews as part of the screening process.

The NJDOC has been dealing proactively with gang issues for many years, and while security enhancements are valuable tools, it falls to our employees, the outstanding men and women of Corrections, to continue their fine work in keeping our prisons – and staff – safe and secure.



# Buddy System

## Officer and His Canine Partner Help Apprehend Bank Robber

Senior Correction Officer Robert Sheppard, accompanied by his canine partner Buddy, was driving down the Garden State Parkway on a Friday afternoon in early May. He and Buddy had just completed a training exercise in Ocean County, and the officer was on his way home to begin the weekend.

Suddenly, the senior correction officer's attention was drawn to a state trooper, gun removed from his holster, running across the Parkway. The start of the weekend, it turned out, would have to be delayed.

"The unwritten rule is that if you encounter someone from law enforcement who may be in need of assistance – whether it's an accident scene or whatever – you check to make sure he or she is okay and offer to help out however you can," Sheppard said.

The trooper, Sheppard learned, was in search of an individual who had robbed a bank in the Marmora section of Upper Township. When the trooper heard Buddy barking during his conversation with Sheppard, he requested assistance. Sheppard contacted his superiors and quickly received permission to help track the bank robber.



**Senior Correction Officer Robert Sheppard and his canine partner Buddy assisted in the apprehension of a bank robber on May 8.**

Buddy, incidentally, had graduated from Atlantic City Police Canine Training Center just a week earlier.

"In that kind of situation, your dog is basically an intelligence tool," said Sheppard, a member of the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Canine Unit since 2004. "All law enforcement canines are trained the same, so they'll do their jobs similarly."

While Sheppard and Buddy helped to track the suspect, a call advising of a home invasion came over the State Police radio. Sheppard, along with troopers, made his way to the residence. Upon arrival, he and Buddy covered the back door, while a trooper and his canine partner entered the home

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## Buddy System

from the front. Shortly after 3:15 p.m., approximately two hours after Sheppard spotted the trooper on the Parkway, the suspect was found in the home and apprehended.

In addition to an undisclosed amount of cash, the suspect was in possession of thousands of dollars worth of valuables that had been taken from a bedroom of the home in which he was apprehended.

"A bank robber, like an escaped inmate, either has a plan or doesn't have one," Sheppard pointed out. "It certainly seemed as if this guy had no escape plan."

The officer downplayed the fact that his actions had a direct impact on the capture of a suspected bank robber.

"I'm glad Buddy and I were able to assist in the apprehension," Sheppard concluded.

"When I saw the trooper run across the road with his gun drawn, it was a matter of doing what I was trained to do."



# Aiding New Jersey's Wildlife

## A Day in the Life of a Wildlife Rehabilitator

It's 4:30 a.m. and the day has just begun for Bea Stowe.

Her daily morning routine includes hand-feeding and medicating the injured and nursing wounds that range from the most minor to the very grave. Tending to family, domestic pets and last, but not least, also part of her agenda is self.

Then, it's off to South Woods State Prison.

By day, Stowe is a personnel assistant who has been with the New Jersey Department of Corrections since the 1990s.

Outside of South Woods, Stowe is a wife and mother of two.

However, her resume includes another significant role. Stowe is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in the State of New Jersey.

"I've always had a love for animals, and I've worked with wildlife pretty much since March 1990," said Stowe, who has been involved in wildlife rehabilitation officially for about five years.

She became licensed with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) Division of Fish and Wildlife after completing a one-year apprenticeship under a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Stowe actually exceeded the state requirement and instead served as an apprentice for close to two years.

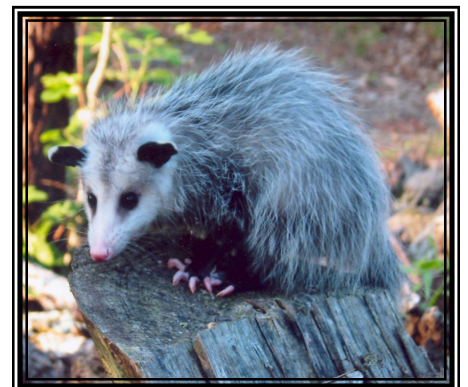
Yet, Stowe doesn't carry the load of "rehabbing" all by herself. It's a family affair.

"My husband's been very supportive," she related. "When I married him, he wasn't an animal lover. Actually, he's allergic to most animals. My teenage son and daughter are also quite supportive."

Stowe's mother-in-law even lends an occasional helping hand.



***Among the animals Bea Stowe has assisted are a raccoon named Miss Ellie (above) and a possum named Victoria.***



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## Aiding New Jersey's Wildlife

Most of Stowe's rehabilitation efforts take place right on her spacious 4 ½-acre property in Cumberland County, where she has a structure that serves as a wildlife rehabilitation center.

"We don't release the bigger animals on my property," she stated. "We take them to other locations. However, we do release smaller animals on the property, since there are plenty of trees."

Stowe has tended to the needs of injured wildlife of all kinds, including squirrels, opossums, wild rabbits, raccoons, skunks, birds and deer, and has prepared them for release back to the wild.

"We see animals that have fallen out of trees and have cuts, scrapes and bruises," she said. "We've cared for animals that were hit by cars. Those injuries are usually the most serious. We've rescued birds with torn wings. One time, a swan we picked up had half its bill ripped off. Cat attacks are common, especially with baby bunnies and squirrels. The injuries we come across vary. We've seen some pretty horrific things."

"Just recently, we rescued a seagull that was stuck in razor wire at Southern State Correctional Facility," Stowe continued. "His wings were hyper-extended, and one foot was resting on top of one of the razors. He had blood all over his chest, legs and feet. We were able to get him down. I took him to my vet. He cleaned up the cuts. I actually thought he would be okay. Unfortunately, he died several days later. Sometimes, it's just heartbreaking."

Caring for orphaned wildlife is another responsibility Stowe has as a wildlife rehabilitator. She often comes to the rescue of baby wildlife unearthed when people tend to their lawns or cut down trees, which is how she came to raise her first litter of squirrels almost 20 years ago.

"My father-in-law was cutting down a tree during the month of March, and inside the tree were four baby squirrels that were only about a day or two old," recalled Stowe. "They were still pink, and their eyes were closed. I wasn't even sure that they were squirrels. They looked like little peanuts. All four fit in the palm of my hand. I found a woman in Atlantic County who coached me through what I needed to do to get them to survive. It was a very long, hard road, but that July, we released them."

"Releases can be difficult," she reflected. "Some are harder than others, but ultimately that's the goal. We strive to get the animals back to nature. Fish and Game is very strict

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## Aiding New Jersey's Wildlife

with their regulations. As tough as it is, that's what we work toward – getting them to a point where they're able to go back out into the wild.

"I remember the time we went to release seven raccoons. Six left, but one that we had named Daphne didn't go. When we opened the cage, she left, but then turned around and came running up my leg and climbed on me. She just wasn't ready to go like the others. We had to bring her home and give her a couple more months. Sometimes it takes a little longer, and we're willing to give the animals whatever time they need. After giving Daphne a few months, we went to release her again, and she left right away. She just needed a little longer to figure out she was wild. Her second release was actually tougher, because when I let her go that time, and she did what she was supposed to do, it was bittersweet."

Stowe has a sense about dealing with animals which most people would avoid.

"You have to understand that animals all have very different personalities, and some are just naturally more aggressive than others," she said. "You also have to know what the animal that you're dealing with is capable of doing. Although there is a risk of getting some type of disease or illness if something bites, we take every precaution. Injured adults can be a challenge. For them, we use blankets and towels to get their heads covered and secured. The babies aren't usually too much of an issue. However, when we get infants in, they are quarantined for a period of time.

"We wear gloves and bleach everything at all times," Stowe related. "We also sterilize everything our animals eat off and drink from. We are very cautious not to cross contaminate. It's for our sake, their sake and the well-being of all our animals.

"In the case of rabid animals, we let animal control will deal with them," continued Stowe. "There is no cure for rabies, so contamination is something you never want to happen. We certainly are not going to put ourselves in harm's way."

In addition to referrals from the NJDEP Web site, calls regarding injured and orphaned wildlife pour in from a variety of sources, including local veterinarians, animal control agencies and fellow rehabbers from neighboring counties.

Stowe, who has more than 800 rehabilitations to her credit, is a firm believer that the best intervention when it comes to wildlife in need of assistance is a telephone call to someone knowledgeable about properly caring for wild animals.

Having rehabbed close to 150 animals thus far this year, Stowe foresees her final total for 2009 swelling to approximately 200.

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## Aiding New Jersey's Wildlife

In light of the expense involved in wildlife rehabilitation in New Jersey, Stowe's efforts can be costly.

"The state doesn't provide wildlife rehabbers with funding," she said. "We are not getting anything. We bear the expense. Fortunately, our vet has been very supportive. A lot of the work that he does on the animals, he does free of charge."

Despite the time and financial obligations, Stowe has no immediate plans to retire from wildlife rehabilitation.

"As long as I'm able, I'll continue rehabbing," she related. "We've seen some amazing rehabbing facilities. My goal would be to have a similar facility someday. God willing, and if I stay healthy, that's what I hope to have. A place where we can coexist."

The workday at South Woods has come to an end, and Stowe heads home for a "wild" evening.



**Deputy Commissioner Lydell Sherrer presents Bea Stowe with a State of New Jersey Public Service Recognition Award.**

In addition to her husband and kids, awaiting her arrival home are five raccoons – Roxy, Renee, Arnold, Carmine and Sonny; two flying squirrels – Ace and Angel; one baby squirrel named Dustin; and one baby opossum named Fred.

Stowe's domestic pets will also be standing by for a bit of tender-loving care. Requiring a fair amount of attention are eight house cats – Abigail, Gus, Ashley, Terrance, Wilson, Gabriella, Ty and Chester; two barn cats – Tessa and Sissy; two horses – Mac's Factor and Regarding Henry, also known as Dude; Webber the duck; and Misty Mae, a tabby cat who hangs out with Webber.

Believe it or not, Stowe hasn't duplicated a name yet.

A good night for the dedicated rehabber will render about four hours of sleep. Yet, a full night of rescues and nurturing, especially during busy season, might result in a mere two hours.

Before she knows it, it's 4:30 a.m. and another day has just begun for Bea Stowe...





# Planning Ahead

## Garden State Inmates Take Part in Career Focus Day

His morning workshop had concluded, and Jahaad McLaurin, an inmate at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility, was anxious to discuss residual income.

Yes, residual income.

"The truth is, I never heard that term before today," McLaurin admitted, "but after the way it was explained to me, it's definitely a concept I like. Basically, residual income is all about maximizing your investment, turning your money into more money. That's something everyone needs to know about."

McLaurin was one of nearly 400 Garden State inmates to take part in Career Focus Day, which was held May 14 at the Yardville prison. Nineteen workshops were held during the course of the day, featuring a variety of guest presenters from government agencies and industry. The workshops were designed to provide inmates both direction and perspective in anticipation of their eventual release and search for employment.



***Guest presenters from government agencies and industry led workshops for inmates during Career Focus Day at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility.***

"It's so important for us to maintain contact with the outside world," said McLaurin, whose workshop was led by a representative of Ameriplan USA. "Otherwise, we have no idea what's going on and how things are changing."

"I'm hoping to start my own business [in construction], so I can learn a lot from a program like this," he continued. "From what I've been told, I'll need a viable plan as well as the commitment to stick to that plan. That's pretty good advice, and I'm grateful for any advice that can help prepare me for the rest of my life."

Fellow inmate Vaughn Suber echoed McLaurin's sentiments.

"A day like today is all about trying to better ourselves," he said. "We don't want to feel lost when we get out of here."

Suber attended a workshop that focused on the Successful Transition and Reentry Series (STARS), a course that provides offenders nearing their release with a structured and detailed approach to addressing each major re-entry barrier.

"There are all kinds of things we need to know, things like how to find a job, get an apartment

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## Planning Ahead

or buy a car," he explained. "Now I have a better idea of what I'll have to do."

That's precisely the kind of feedback program co-coordinators Diane Patrick and Francine Stromberg were hoping to hear from the offenders. When staff members at Garden State had their initial meeting to plan the facility's annual job fair, it was decided that the format would be changed to a professional workshop model this year.

"We thought the inmates could really benefit from hearing what will be expected of them directly from field representatives," Patrick said.

One of the presenters, Luis Rivera of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, emphasized to his audience that, despite their plight, there is no reason to feel a sense of isolation so common among inmates.

"There are a multitude of services available to help them out," Rivera noted. "I let them know that we can provide them with resources, and we can provide them with hope."

Added Martin Jasinski of the Burlington County Board of Social Services: "We talk to them about the requirements that need to be met in order to be eligible for certain programs. We certainly don't want to give them false hopes, but at the same time, there are a large number of programs they'll have an opportunity to utilize.

"I was impressed with the number of guys who are seriously thinking about their future. We had inmates who were talking to us about hypothetical situations, but you just know these situations aren't really hypothetical. They are situations these guys expect to be in."

Gene Blicharz, another presenter from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, told those who attended his workshop about a list that was compiled of the top 40 country-and-western singers of all time. Johnny Cash was at the top of the list, while Waylon Jennings was number four. Both spent time in prison.

"I suggested to the inmates that maybe this experience will ultimately help them in the future. After all, they say everything in life happens for a reason."

Blicharz touted the one-stop centers throughout the state that can provide former offenders with a wealth of resources to help ease their transition back into the community.

"First and foremost, I told them that there's so much to do on the outside that they don't ever want to go back to prison once they're released," he said. "Then I let them know that the key to their future is largely within themselves. With the number of resources out there, if they think they can succeed, they can. Unfortunately, if they think they can't, they're probably right also."



# Educational Experience

## Mates Inn Employee Is 2009 Valedictorian at Burlington County College

When Michelle Smith decided to enroll at Burlington County College (BCC) back in 2004, her goal was to maintain her grades in order to remain eligible for a New Jersey Department of Corrections program through which her tuition would be partially reimbursed. She not only accomplished her mission, but she did so with an exclamation point.

Smith, an NJDOC teacher's assistant since 2001, graduated with honors and served as the class valedictorian at the May 16 commencement ceremony. Smith's magical day – she received an associate's degree in education – was made even more unforgettable when she learned that she'd be receiving a full scholarship to Wilmington University in Delaware to continue her studies.

The 48-year-old Smith smiled as she recalled her introduction to BCC. Most of her classes were in the evening and consisted largely of adults, but during her first semester, she was admittedly apprehensive about fitting in with her younger fellow students.

"I remember this group project we had to do," related Smith, who has worked at Mates Inn since July 2008. "There I was, at the home of one of my 19-year-old classmates, sitting at her kitchen table, working on the project.

"Everything turned out fine," she continued. "I really enjoyed dealing with the young people. In fact, it was almost therapeutic."

Sadly, Smith's use of the word "therapeutic" would seem appropriate. Just a few years earlier – in November 2000 – she was confronted with a parent's worst fear. Her only child, Markia Harley, collapsed and died after suffering a brain aneurysm during a basketball tryout at Moorestown Friends School, where she had been a freshman. Markia was 14.



***Michelle Smith graduated from Burlington County College as class valedictorian and received a full scholarship to attend Wilmington University.***

"Before she went to school that morning, she said she'd call me and let me know how

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## Educational Experience

she did at the tryout," Smith remembered. "The phone call I got instead changed everything. My life had revolved around raising her and providing her with the best opportunities. And suddenly, she was gone."

Shortly thereafter, Smith went to work for the NJDOC.

During the two decades she spent in the corporate world, working as both an operator and assistant supervisor for AT&T, she realized she had a gift for comforting people. Perhaps because her father, Eugene Smith, had been a correction officer, she knew she would be able to utilize those skills with the NJDOC. She began her career in corrections at what then was known as the Boot Camp in New Lisbon.

"Some of the teachers would tell their difficult students to go see Ms. Smith," she said. "I truly enjoyed working with those young men."

Eventually, with encouragement from NJDOC Director of Education Patty Friend, she opted to acquire the credentials that would allow her to grow into a career as an educator or a counselor. The first step in that process was enrolling in BCC. Wilmington University, where she began attending classes shortly after Labor Day, is step two.

"I knew I wanted to continue with my education, but I wasn't sure how I was going to make it happen financially," said Smith, who noted that her mother, Alverta Smith, was instrumental in her pursuit of education.

"I had discussed my situation with the president of the college, and unbeknownst to me, he called the people at Wilmington University, told them about my story and my grades, and got them to agree to admit me with a full scholarship. I wasn't told about the scholarship prior to the graduation, so I was shocked. But even more than that, I was so grateful."

Smith looks forward to forging ahead academically and honoring the memory of her daughter, who was an outstanding student. Said Smith: "She has been and will continue to be my inspiration."



# One for the Record

## Fathers Connect through Project Storybook

Little Adrianna in Cape May County may not know it yet, but any day now she is getting something special in the mail from her Dad — the sound of his voice. She hasn't seen her father, Tyree, since September 2008, and that's a long time for a 2-year-old child. And while he may not be home until February of next year, Project Storybook is one way for father and daughter to remain in contact.

For inmates at the Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, many of whom are fathers of young children, Project Storybook can bridge the time and space between father and child. Located in the rolling hills of Hunterdon County, Mountainview is a long ride from places like Camden, Atlantic City or Vineland, and visits can be few or nonexistent.

Having originated at the nearby Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women, Project Storybook came to Mountainview about a year ago due in large part to the efforts of Assistant Superintendent Valerie Smith and social worker Greg Bills, who noted that some 40 percent of the inmates are fathers. So a sign-up sheet was placed in the main compound, inmates began to read books to their children, and the tape and the book would be sent to their little ones.

"From our perspective, we are here to help inmates, and this is such a positive program," Bills said. "More than 60 inmates have participated, and the feedback from the families has been very encouraging."

Teacher Elise Dennihy pointed out that although it takes only 10 or 15 minutes to read a book — all books have been donated — the rewards can last a lifetime.

"This program helps everyone," she said. "The inmate, who may have some difficulty reading himself, is encouraged to do better. We help them with the pronunciations and such, and truly, this connects father and child, whose relationship can be tenuous because of incarceration. In fact, there are times when the inmate has difficulty finishing the book, he is overcome with emotion."

Assistant Social Services Supervisor Crescent Clarkson is encouraged by the large turnout of inmates for Project Storybook.

"Truly, this program can establish common ground between the man and his child," she related. "They often choose stories to read that they recall from childhood, and they will say in their notes that this was Daddy's favorite story as a child. Once again, books become the great unifier."

Research shows that inmates who learn to become better fathers are less likely to return

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## One for the Record

to prison, and that their children adjust better when they are reunited. Clarkson reported that the New Jersey Department of Corrections has been tireless in its efforts to encourage parenting skills.

In 2008, for example, the department's Office of Transitional Services implemented the Helping Offenders Parent Effectively (HOPE) program, through which offenders can learn to be better fathers and have an increasingly positive effect on the lives of their children.

*They often choose stories to read that they recall from childhood, and they will say in their notes that this was Daddy's favorite story as a child.*

As always, the success of Project Storybook, as with other social programs, is directly related to the folks who volunteer their time, talents and books to the cause. Dennihy, who is deeply involved in the volunteer process, said bluntly, "Despite the fact that he has committed a crime, the inmate's family needs to be intact. Yes, punish the father, but not the child."

Tyree beams with pride as he talks about his daughter.

"She is very independent and always asks me on the phone if my shoelaces are tied," said Tyree, who has completed two books for her, "Flicks Adventures" and "Blues Clues."

"I tell her I'll be home soon and send her drawings to go with the tapes," he continued. "I reach out and let her know that the love is still there, even if I'm not."

He is quiet for a moment, then added, "Just because I'm wearing khaki doesn't mean I'm not still her Pop."



# Homeland Security

## Edna Mahan Captain Graduates with Master's Degree

May 19 was an exciting day in the Ryan household.

Captain Robert Ryan of Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women and his family celebrated Ryan's most recent achievement – a Master of Science in Homeland Security (MSHS) degree.

Ryan earned his graduate degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University, and while one can hardly imagine graduation day being more momentous, it was for Ryan, thanks to two significant milestones.

The 21-year veteran of the New Jersey Department of Corrections was among the first group of students to complete the MSHS program, which commenced in January 2008. Ryan was also the first student to participate in the university's commencement ceremony as a graduate of the MSHS program, the first of its kind in New Jersey and one of the few master's-level programs of its type in the country.



***Captain Robert Ryan displays his graduate degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University.***

"I am proud of my achievement and honored to be part of a special time in the history of Fairleigh Dickinson's homeland security program," Ryan said.

"When I started in the department, I had a high school diploma," he continued. "I first went to Middlesex County College for five years at night and earned an associate's degree. Then I went to Kean University for another five years at night and earned a bachelor's degree, and then I went on to Fairleigh Dickinson for my master's degree. I went to night school for close to 12 years. Anyone can do it, it just takes time."

Ryan completed the 36-credit degree program six months earlier than the projected two-year period, all the while fulfilling his family responsibilities at home and his professional duties at Edna Mahan.

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## Homeland Security

"Courses were taught on-campus, off-campus and on-line, which made it easy to fit into my schedule," he related.

"The program was diverse and included coursework in subjects such as terrorism studies, weapons of mass destruction, research and policy analysis, strategic planning and implementation, and collaborative leadership," the captain continued.

Shortly after graduation, Ryan was honored with a letter of commendation from the executive associate dean of Fairleigh Dickinson's School of Administrative Science, the branch of the university that administers the MSHS program.

"I am thrilled to congratulate you as the first student to take part in Fairleigh Dickinson University's Commencement Celebration as a graduate of the Master of Science in Homeland Security program," wrote Ronald Calissi. "Having done so well in the program, you are well equipped to serve as a leader and expert in the greater law enforcement and security community. I expect the knowledge you have gained ... will provide you with an extraordinary base from which to move into the future."

With a new degree, Ryan is motivated and empowered to make a difference in the post-911 world.

"Someday, I see myself becoming involved in some aspect of emergency planning," he said. "We may not be able to predict when the next terrorist attack or catastrophic event may be. However, we can increase our resiliency to such events through proper preparedness.

"I was looking for something to bring me to the next level in my career. I felt that the homeland security program, combined with the training and experience I've gained with the Department of Corrections, would help to elevate my skills to the level necessary to address the current security challenges that we are facing here in the State of New Jersey and beyond."



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# What's Happening

## Green Thumbs Translate into Blue Ribbons

Just a few months after winning a handful of ribbons at the Philadelphia Flower Show, the horticulture program at Jones Farm earned 12 first-place ribbons and 24 ribbons overall at the Hunterdon County 4H and Agricultural Fair and the accompanying Hunterdon County Community Garden Club's Standard Flower Show. The events were held August 19-23 at South County Park in Ringoes.

Sixteen of the 29 Jones Farm entries in the 4H and Agricultural Fair earned ribbons, including 10 first-place finishers – leeks, onions, cherry tomato (sugary), butternut squash, swiss chard, parsley bunch, long thin eggplant, hot frying pepper, yellow crook neck squash and largest sunflower head (18 inches).

All eight Jones Farm entries in the Standard Flower Show captured ribbons, including blue ribbons for best floral arrangement (themed "It's Time for a Walk") and best aromatic herb (curry).

"All entries were grown at Jones Farm with no pesticides, making them as close to organic as you can get without actually having the USDA's seal of approval," said instructor Deborah Mahon, who came to Jones Farm in September 2008.

Mahon, who has been in the horticulture industry for 27 years, joined the New Jersey Department of Corrections nine years ago. She had laid the foundation for the horticulture program at Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility before transferring to Jones Farm, which now has a greenhouse and a vegetable garden that measures approximately 16,000 square feet.



***The horticulture program at Jones Farm, coordinated by instructor Deborah Mahan, collected two dozen ribbons at the Hunterdon County 4H and Agricultural Fair and the accompanying Hunterdon County Community Garden Club's Standard Flower Show.***

## Marine Corps League Fetes 2 from Edna Mahan CFW

The Marine Corps League honored two staff members of Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women during its convention on June 20 in Woodbridge.

Sgt. Robert Fackina, Edna Mahan's military liaison, was recognized for his efforts on behalf of the program. Senior Correction Officer Anthony Quinones was the recipient of the league's Heroism Award for assisting and perhaps saving the life of a motor vehicle accident victim in November 2008.

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## **Youngster on the Write Track**

When Isaiah Keith-Grant, then a fourth-grade student at South River Elementary School, was assigned to write an essay discussing "What New Jersey Means to Me," he sought guidance from his mother. Stephanie Grant, a secretary in the Business Office at Northern State Prison, had a few suggestions, but she encouraged the youngest of her four children to "use his mind and put his own creative spin on the essay."

The 10-year-old child followed Mom's advice, touching on everything from the quality of healthcare in New Jersey to the fact that the Garden State has its own National Basketball Association team. His efforts didn't go unnoticed – or unrewarded. The youngster's essay was selected to receive a commendation from Senator Barbara Buono.

"I'm so proud of the effort Keith put into the essay," Grant said, "and I'm honored by Senator Buono's recognition."

## **Local Students Embark on Odyssey**

Shortly before the end of the 2008-09 school year, the Odyssey of the Mind team from Ewing's Antheil Elementary School – consisting of six fifth-grade students – journeyed to Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, to take on the world.

At the conclusion of the five-day competition, they were welcomed home as heroes. And why not? In this, their second consecutive trip to the world finals, the team placed eighth in a 53-team international field with contingents from as far away as China, Singapore and Germany. One member of the Antheil squad was Scott Franks, son of Scott and Dawn Franks, both of whom are employed at the New Jersey Department of Corrections' Central Office headquarters.

Now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, Odyssey of the Mind, a problem-solving competition, starts with regional competitions and state competitions. The top finishers qualify for the world finals.

According to Dawn Franks, the team representing Antheil in Iowa, "had to develop and perform a humorous eight-minute skit involving a team-built mechanical creature. The creature had to perform several different tasks during the skit. The fifth-graders also had to perform in a spontaneous competition. The kids did a great job. Odyssey encourages them to think outside the box, and this team was unbelievably creative."

One of the most creative teams in the world, in fact.

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### **CRAF Announces Employees of Month**

Sgt. Mervin Ganesh was selected as the Employee of the Month for August at the Central Reception and Assignment Facility. Other CRAF employees who have received similar recognition are Senior Identification Officer Mia Padgett-Patterson (July), Senior Correction Officer Karriem Bayah (June), Principal Clerk Typist Kelly Greer (May), SCO Laurence Fisher (April) and social worker Richard Scarpa (March).

